

Impact of Resilience Training on Female Offenders

Funded by:
Office of Student Research

JoAnn Mitchell
Indiana University Purdue University at Columbus

Background

Over 30 years of inquiry has been devoted to the phenomenon of resilience, which is “the ability to persist in the face of challenges and to bounce back from adversity” (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011, p. 25), and this research has determined that resilience can, indeed, be taught (Seligman, 2006, p. 30). I have served as a volunteer at the Madison Juvenile Correctional Facility for over three years, and when I was introduced to resilience, it was a natural segue to pursue studying the impact of resilience training on women in prison.

Madison Correctional Facility

The Madison Correctional Facility (MCF) is a minimum security prison located in Madison, Indiana. It currently has a population of 612 offenders, and over 60% of the women in this facility are serving sentences for drug-related crimes. Unlike some prison populations, many of these women are highly motivated to make significant changes in their lives and to develop positive skills. The prison staff has already demonstrated their enthusiastic support for the Resilience Study.



Method & Procedure

Of the 612 current offenders, 120 participants will be recruited using posters and handouts. The 120 will be assigned to either the control or the intervention group using a computer-generated random assignment list. All 120 participants will be measured pretest and posttest using six assessments; the 60 in the intervention group will be assessed twice during the intervention. These assessments are: Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (Psychology Foundation of Australia, 2011), the Attributional Style Questionnaire (Peterson, Semmel, von Baeyer, Abrahamson, Metalsky, & Seligman, 1982), Generalized Self-efficacy Survey (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), The Ostracism Experience Scale (Carter-Sowell, 2010), and the Resilience Quotient Scale (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). The scales will measure for changes in depression, anxiety, stress, self-efficacy, ostracism, attribution style, and resilience.

The 60 in the intervention group will participate in up to nine lessons based on the Penn Resiliency Project (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011, p. 25-34), The Stanford Forgiveness Project (Luskin, 2002, pp. 1-89), and *Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 1995, pp. 47-63). The final session will feature three IUPUC Psychology Department graduates who have demonstrated resilience by overcoming their past as prisoners.

We will also compare the change of engagement in positive opportunities between those in the intervention group and those in the control group.

Completion Timeline

It is projected that the Resilience Study will begin during the second week of July 2013 and be completed by the end of August 2013.

References

- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam, 47-63.
- Luskin, F. (2002). *Forgive for Good*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Reivich, K., Seligman, M.E.P., & McBride, S. (2011). Master resilience training in the U.S. Army, *American Psychologist*, 66, 1, 25-34.
- Seligman, M.E.P. (2006). *Learned Optimism*. New York: Vintage Books, 30.